Health Impact Assessment for Communities

(HIA) Toolkit
Why this toolkit?

This toolkit will help you to **undertake** a health impact assessment or to **analyse** the quality of existing health impact assessments that you may come across. It addresses all the key HIA areas that you need to know about. It will also provide you with guidance on how best to **facilitate** a HIA. It is here for you to use as it is or for you to select relevant sections that are useful to you in your own individual contexts. It is your tool, so make it work for you…

**How do we think about health?**

- Absence of disease?
- Eating well?
- Feeling energetic?
- Being able to do the things we want to do without our bodies holding us back?
- Something unachievable?

**HIA uses a broad definition of health:**

“A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

**WHO, 1946**

**What do we mean when we talk about health in HIA?**

**The Main Determinants of Health**

Health is about more than disease and illness. Many factors contribute to our health and wellbeing. HIA encompasses the wider determinants of health.
Community HIA

Community HIA is a way to bring the health concerns of the community into discussions and decision making. It enables us to think about ‘what matters’ as opposed to just ‘what works’.

It is a tool that can be used to guide decision making, thinking and discussion.

Community HIA encompasses HIAs led by communities as well as those with significant community involvement (for example where the HIA is requested or initiated by the community but led by, for example, the local authority or health board).

What is health impact assessment?

Health impact assessment is a process through which evidence (of different kinds), interests, values and meanings are brought into dialogue between relevant stakeholders (politicians, professionals and citizens) in order imaginatively to understand and anticipate the effects of change on health and health inequalities in a given population.

Gareth Williams

What HIA is and is not...

It is...

• A flexible and scalable tool
• Useable for everyone
• A structured way of assessing health and wellbeing impacts
• A way of bringing people together, working in partnership for the health of communities
• Applicable across proposals of all shapes and sizes

It is not...

• A protest tool, to identify only negative impacts
• A rigid set of procedures
• Looking just at impacts on illness and disease
• A statutory requirement (although it is recommended!)
• Evaluation

HIA and other impact assessments

There are many different types of impact assessment, some of which you may be familiar with and some less so. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Health Needs Assessment (HNA), Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) are just a few.

Whilst some of these impact assessments cover health (to a greater or lesser extent) HIA is the only impact assessment that covers health in its broadest holistic definition, working within the wider determinants of health (rather than focusing on illness or health services).

Some organisations choose to use an approach whereby several impact assessments are integrated to try and prevent overlap. Where this approach is adopted it is essential to maintain the broader definition of health in order to fully assess potential positive and negative impacts.
### Types of HIA

**Prospective:** prior to a proposal being implemented  
**Concurrent:** running alongside a proposal  
**Retrospective:** looking back on a proposal  

**Desktop, rapid, intermediate, comprehensive, mini, maxi, midi:** different depths and types of HIA. Most commonly used terms are desktop, rapid and comprehensive. The type of HIA that you need will be established during the screening and scoping stages of the process. One thing to remember is that the name of the HIA is not what is important; it is deciding on an HIA that is right for your needs.

### Who uses HIA and why?

- Policy and decision makers  
- Communities  
- Local government  
- Local health boards  
- Voluntary groups  
- National government  
- Private companies  
- Written into planning guidelines on roads and opencast coal mining developments in Wales – strong policy support  
- Promotion of greater equity in health  
- Increased awareness of how decisions may affect health  
- Promotion of evidence and knowledge based planning and decision making  
- Better coordination of action between sectors to improve and protect health  
- Maximisation of health benefits and minimisation of health risks

The HIA process should be **open**, involving a wide range of stakeholders; **transparent**, including the documenting of the process; ethical in its use of evidence and methods of participation; **equitable** through a presumption in favour of reducing health inequalities; **robust** in its methods for consideration of evidence and participation; **participatory** by actively engaging with and involving stakeholders from a wide range of organisations through appropriate methods; **sustainable** through consideration of impacts that are short and long term, direct and indirect in order to inform sustainably policies, programmes and projects and **democratic**, emphasising the rights of people to participate in major decisions that affect their lives and, through HIA, enabling people to actively participate and contribute to decision making processes.

For case study examples of how and where HIA has been used go to www.whiasu.wales.nhs.uk
Now to do a HIA…
1. Screening
2. Scoping
3. Assessment (appraisal)
4. Reporting and recommendations
5. Monitoring and evaluation

1. Screening
Assessing if and what kind of HIA you should be doing

Who should be screening?
Screening is usually carried out by a small group (2 or 3 people) and is most commonly those who are initiating the HIA. Other key stakeholders will be brought in at later stages of the process.

Key Questions
- Will the proposal impact on health?
- Who will be affected?
- Scale of impact: Will it be positive or negative?
- Rapid or more in-depth assessment?
- Using the evidence

Vulnerable groups
These will depend on the characteristics of the local population and the proposal in question. This list is a guide and intended to get you thinking about who we may need to give special consideration to (e.g. those displaying more than one characteristic)
- Age related groups (could specify age group where appropriate)
  - Children and young people
  - Older people
- Income related groups
  - People on low income
  - Economically inactive
  - Unemployed
- Groups who suffer social discrimination or other social disadvantage (specify)
  - People with disabilities, refugee groups, people seeking asylum, travellers, single parent families, lesbian and gay people, ethnic minority groups, religious groups
- Geographical groups
  - People living in areas known to exhibit poor economic or health indicators
  - People living in isolated areas
  - People unable to access services and facilities

TOP TIPS:
Before you start your HIA it may be useful to find out whether anyone else has already carried out a HIA on the proposal or project under consideration. If so a useful starting point may be to assess the quality of the HIA using the quality review section of this toolkit. Then, depending on the outcome, you may want to start the HIA process from scratch yourselves...
Screening sheet *

- Title of programme policy or project
- Description (including key aims and objectives)
- Key population groups affected (vulnerable groups and any others)
- Summary of significant or moderate impacts

Is the proposal likely to impact on, or have implications for:

- Individual lifestyles
- Social and community influences
- Living conditions
- Economic conditions
- Access and quality of services
- Other direct or indirect effects on health and wellbeing

Recommendations

- Are the impacts that have been identified enough to warrant a HIA?
- If no, what are the reasons for not conducting an assessment?
- If yes, outline next steps
- Do any additional actions need to be taken as a result of this process?

* Click here to download the Screening Record Sheet
2. Scoping

Working out what you want your HIA to look at, how and when.

Key Questions
- What are the timescales for undertaking the assessment?
- Geographical boundaries of the project?
- What impacts / determinants should the assessment focus on?
- What financial and human resources are available?
- Who are our stakeholders?
- Should a steering group be set up? If so who should be on it?
- Roles and responsibilities?
- How should decision makers be involved?
- What methods to collect evidence should be used?
- Friends, family or the wider community
- Protest groups (both locally or further afield)
- Community organisations
- Statutory organisations; Local Health Board, Local Authority
- Key decision makers
- HIA Support

Every HIA is different and so are the stakeholders. It is up to you as a scoping team to decide who your stakeholders are and how best to involve them in the HIA (be it on the steering group, in focus groups, as advisers or as participants at your HIA workshop).

Do we need a steering group, and if so, who should be on it?
A steering group is not essential but can provide an effective means of distributing tasks and helps to promote wider participation in, and ownership of, the HIA process. It is up to you to decide whether a steering group is necessary in the case of your HIA...

Who are our stakeholders? *
HIA works best when people with the relevant knowledge and skills work in partnership. These include people working in public, voluntary and private organisations as well as local communities.

Some examples are:
- Community members
- Communities of interest; affected or involved

* Click here to download the Key Stakeholder Groups
If you do decide to form a steering group you need to carefully consider who you would like to be a part of it.

**Some areas for consideration are:**
- People who can provide specific knowledge
- A strong and impartial chair
- People who are committed to the process
- Specialists from local public health teams can provide information and expertise
- Community representatives are likely to have insights as to how proposals will affect local people

**TOP TIPS:**

The optimum number of people for your steering group is between 6 and 10. Remember that it needs to be representative of your stakeholders.

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**How do we want to involve people in the HIA?**

Having identified who our stakeholders are we need to think about how we want to involve them in the HIA. There are a number of options depending on time and resources (both in terms of people and money) and what depth of information we want to collect...

- Focus groups
- Interviews

**Participatory workshops:**

- Half day workshop
- Overview of proposal and introduction to HIA
- Useful to gain input from a wide range of invited stakeholders
- Working systematically through wider determinants checklist (facilitated by neutral person).

**TOP TIPS:**

It is useful to provide workshop participants with some information about HIA and the proposal prior to the workshop. That way they come prepared and with ideas ready.

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**Community profile**

You should make use of any information or data that is available to you about the characteristics of the local population. This will provide you with a current picture of the locality and can provide a baseline for later evaluation.

**Useful information may include:**

- General attributes such as size, age, gender, income and employment, socio-economic status etc
- Health data, particularly for the groups you have identified as vulnerable
- Quality of life indicators
- Environmental information: housing, transport, air and water quality, access to green space etc
- Local people’s views of the area
**The Evidence**

What kinds do we need and how do we use it?

There are many different kinds of evidence and you need to make use of what is available to you within the time and resources that you have. Evidence forms a central part of HIA and is used to support the assessment and to provide background.

Within the HIA it is likely that you will need both quantitative and qualitative evidence. It is important to remember that some potential impacts are not easily measured but may be equally or more important in terms of their effects on local people health. We need to ensure that people’s experiences, perspectives and feelings are brought into the process.

Remember that not all sources of evidence will be appropriate to your specific HIA and it may be that not all are available to you.

**Sources of evidence**

- **Information on existing population**
  - Routinely collected local statistics for example on health, unemployment, crime, air quality
  - Surveys of local conditions
  - Community profiles
  - Local concerns and anxieties (where documented)
  - Secondary analysis of existing local data
  - Opinion surveys
  - Other local surveys/research

- **Expert opinion**
  - Views of residents and professionals with local knowledge and insight

- **Wider evidence**
  - Research in academic journals (libraries or internet)
  - Research conducted or commissioned by statutory, voluntary or private organisations
  - Information about similar proposals implemented elsewhere (case studies)
3. Assessment *

In order to assess the potential positive and negative health impacts of the proposal in question we will now work through a health and wellbeing determinants checklist that covers a wide range of issues.

As you work through the checklists on the following pages bear in mind that not all proposals will impact (either positively or negatively) on all areas. Some will be more relevant than others, but using the checklist will ensure that you cover all possible bases, and the notes page will enable you to record any potential impacts that you feel might not fit into these categories (although most probably will).

Depending on the type of HIA you are undertaking this exercise may be carried out by a few key stakeholders, or more commonly within a participatory workshop environment with key invited stakeholders. More about participatory workshops (and other ways to involve people in the HIA) later…

For each impact try and describe:

- Whether the impact is positive, negative or neutral
- Population groups likely to be affected
- How the impact is likely to come about (be it directly or indirectly)
- When it is likely to occur
- The likely scale of the impact
- Any evidence to support the above conclusions…

### Health and wellbeing determinants

- **Lifestyles**
  - Diet
  - Physical exercise
  - Use of alcohol, cigarettes, non prescribed drugs
  - Sexual activity
  - Other risk-taking activity

- **Social and community influences on health**
  - Family organisation and roles
  - Citizen power and influence
  - Social support and social networks
  - Neighbourliness
  - Sense of belonging
  - Local pride
  - Divisions in community
  - Social isolation
  - Peer pressure
  - Community identity
  - Cultural and spiritual ethos
  - Racism
  - Other social exclusion

When carrying out your assessment it may be useful to use a flip chart, then type up your findings onto the health and wellbeing determinants tables for assessment (in your materials pack).

* Click here to download the [Tables for Assessment](#)
Health and wellbeing determinants (2)
- Living/environmental conditions affecting health
  - Built environment
  - Neighbourhood design
  - Housing
  - Indoor environment
  - Noise
  - Air and water quality
  - Attractiveness of area
  - Community safety
  - Smell/odour
  - Waste disposal
  - Road hazards
  - Injury hazards
  - Quality and safety of play areas

- Economic conditions affecting health
  - Unemployment
  - Income
  - Economic inactivity
  - Type of employment
  - Workplace conditions

Health and wellbeing determinants (3)
- Access and quality of services
  - Medical services
  - Other caring services
  - Careers advice
  - Shops and commercial services
  - Public amenities
  - Transport
  - Education and training
  - Information technology

- Macro-economic, environmental and sustainability factors
  - Government policies
  - Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
  - Economic development
  - Biological diversity

- Anything else...?
4. Reporting and recommendations *

Following your assessment you need to develop a set of recommendations to take forward from the HIA, based on the key positive and negative impacts that you have identified. Your recommendations need to be clear, concise and achievable. You should also keep them to a manageable number.

You should include recommendations to both mitigate for negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.

When writing your report bear in mind who the intended audience is: a report for a community is likely to look different to one for a planning committee. The report structure in your supporting materials will help you with putting together the right report for the right audience.

**TOP TIPS:**
The report structure provided is intended to be a guide. The contents of the report will be dependent on the HIA being undertaken and additional sections may need to be added where appropriate. Examples of completed HIA reports can be found on the WHIASU website and on the HIA Gateway.

* Click here to download the Report Structure
5. Monitoring and evaluation of the process

The aim of HIA is to inform decision making. As part of the monitoring and evaluation process following the HIA the following questions may be useful:

- How was the HIA used?
- Was the HIA deemed useful by its target audience(s)?
- Did it influence the decision making process? And if so, how?
- Were predictions made correct?
Review of HIAs

Quality review of other peoples HIAs

Sometimes your role may not be to carry out an HIA itself; it may be to look at another HIA that has been done and assess whether it of sufficiently high quality. Of course there is the possibility that if it isn’t then that might lead onto you wanting to carry out your own HIA, but for now let’s focus on the best way to review an HIA report that finds its way into your hands.

There are actually very few review tools out there for you to use, and without some sort of structure reviewing the HIA is difficult. An excellent tool has been developed by Ben Cave Associates and, whilst it is primarily for larger development projects, you can scale it down for your own requirements.

The link above will take you to the BCA Quality Review tool for HIAs. You will need to carefully read through the instructions then work through the assessment process. It is recommended that the assessment is carried out by 2 people, independently of one another, with a consensus then being reached on the final grade of the HIA report. Steps are provided for both an individual and a joint review.

The tables from the review package have been reproduced in your supporting materials for ease of filling in. However, you will need to use these alongside the review tool as there are invaluable explanatory footnotes included in the document.

TOP TIPS:
The sections in the review package should be in your mind when writing up your own HIA reports. Someone may be reviewing your work using the same tool at some point!
How to effectively facilitate an HIA

What does a facilitator do?
If you chose to hold a participatory workshop as part of your HIA you will need someone to facilitate the process.

This person will need to:

• Ensure that all attendees have a chance to voice their opinions (making sure that those with the loudest voices are not the only ones whose views are heard)
• Facilitate the group to work systematically through the wider determinants of health checklist (with the help of a scribe to record what is said).

Who should facilitate?
There are several different types of bias. Generally bias refers to a tendency or preference towards a particular perspective, especially when the tendency interferes with the ability to be impartial, unprejudiced or objective. Some examples of bias are cultural, ethnic, geographical, media and political.

It is important that as a facilitator you try to be as unbiased as possible in order to ensure a well balanced HIA. Remember that you are there to facilitate discussion, not to contribute your own views.

Bias
When deciding who should facilitate your HIA the key is to try and find someone who is familiar with the HIA process. Although your facilitator is not there to input their own views they do need to ensure that all the determinants of health are addressed. Some background knowledge of the proposal in question is also useful. There are many people within organisations such as the local authority, local health board or Communities First who will have had training in HIA – try and find out who they are and if they are willing to help.
**Glossary**

**Determinants of health**: The factors that affect health including genetic factors, lifestyle, social and community networks, cultural and environmental conditions.

**EIA**: Environmental Impact Assessment is a systematic process to assess the actual or potential effects of policies, objectives, programs, plans or activities on the local or global environment. An assessment of risks to the environment either directly or indirectly as a result of human activities.

**EqIA**: Equality Impact Assessment is a process designed to ensure that a policy, project or scheme does not discriminate against any disadvantaged or vulnerable people.

**Equity**: The quality of being fair or impartial; fairness; impartiality

**HIA**: Health Impact Assessment is a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, programme or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population.

**HNA**: Health needs assessment is a systematic method of identifying unmet health and health care needs of a population and making changes to meet those unmet needs. It provides information to improve health, for service planning, priority setting and for policy development.

**Participatory workshop**: A method of involving people in an HIA that involves bringing together key stakeholders to assess the potential positive and negative impacts of a proposal, and develop mitigation measures and recommendations to maximise health benefits.

**SEA**: Strategic Environmental Assessment is an EIA applied at the programme, plan or policy level (ie earlier in the decision making process than project level EIA) to ensure that environmental implication are identified prior to their implementation so that they can be modified to avoid or minimise the adverse environmental effects.

**SIA**: Social Impact assessment is methodology to review the social effects of infrastructure projects and other development interventions.

**Stakeholders**: a person, group or organization who can have an influence on or will be influenced by the proposal and its outcomes.

**Steering group**: A group that oversees a project, make strategic decisions.
Useful websites

Wales HIA Support Unit www.whiasu.wales.nhs.uk
World Health Organisation: www.who.int/hia/en
International Association for Impact Assessment: www.iaia.org

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